

203. You will not say positively?—I can say absolutely they have not so far as my company is concerned. There is a position at our factories which, I think, answers that more clearly than I can answer it. At the commencement of the commandeering scheme, in order to utilize the space at our factories to the very utmost, I told the Government and the operators who were operating through our factories that I was going to pool the whole of the meat in the works, so that there would be no necessity for holding different owners' meat in different stacks, and thus causing a certain percentage of loss in efficiency. We have pooled the whole of the meat that comes into our factories, and when a shipment is made we do not attempt in any way to actually ship out the proportion to which each owner is entitled: we simply ship out whatever meat lies handiest. We have assumed in our accounts that whatever has gone out has gone out in proper proportion, and we work an intermediate account between our clients and the Imperial Government, which is their *pro rata* proportion of the shipments quite irrespective of whether all their meat has gone out or not.

204. *Mr. Pearce.*] You suggest that you do not give any different treatment to Sims, Cooper, and Co. in your works at Wanganui than to any one else?—We give a rebate to any big shipper.

205. And do you get a guarantee or agreement from that firm in regard to your works?—In regard to financing the works, do you mean?

206. No, in regard to keeping them full?—No, I did not mean to imply that at all.

207. Is it not a fact that when you built those works you had a guarantee from them that they would to a large extent fill the works?—Not that they would fill the works, but we had a guarantee that they would support us with the freezing.

208. Is it not a fact that you freeze at Wanganui for Sims, Cooper, and Co. stock which comes from the Waikato?—We freeze the stock wherever it comes from.

209. Does not that show they are prepared to pay an enormously increased cost in railage as compared with the ordinary buyers within forty or fifty miles?—It would seem to be so on the face of it; but still it must be borne in mind that the stock has got to go out of the North Island to the port, and it is quite an open question as to whether the proper method of procedure is to freeze stock at inland works and then ship to a far-distant port, or bring the live-stock in the first place to be treated at one point.

210. Is not Masterton much nearer Wellington than Wanganui?—There is not such an overwhelming difference.

211. It would mean 6d. or 1s. per head?—That state of affairs has been in existence before our advent in the North Island.

212. You know the conditions as regards the prices for your works—you have your own buyers for the Wanganui works?—Yes.

213. In that district there are two sets of buyers?—Yes.

214. Can you tell us whether there is any agreement between the two as regards prices: do they compete with one another?—To some extent they do, but, as is the case at all our southern factories, where stock is coming to our factories our standing instruction is to all buyers that there is no use in paying 21s. for £1 worth if the stock is not going past us.

215. I am referring to the two companies—the buyers of your own company and the buyers of Sims, Cooper, and Co.: do they buy together or compete?—To a certain extent they compete.

216. Have you any knowledge in what way Sims, Cooper, and Co.'s stock is shipped?—No, we have no control. We have a knowledge as to whom they nominate in London.

217. *Mr. T. A. H. Field.*] Did you not say that the reason why you took such an optimistic view of the unlikelihood of the American Meat Trust ever getting New Zealand under its thumb was because the New Zealand freezing-works are all locally owned?—And because they are so numerous.

218. Do you know that some of the freezing-works are American-owned?—I do not know. I have heard statements in connection with one or two works.

219. What works?—I have heard that the Westfield works are controlled by Vestey and Co., and I have also heard it stated that Vestey and Co. are American interests.

220. And what other works?—It is only rumour I have heard, and I cannot attach any value to it.

221. Do you know that Armour and Co. or some American companies have issued pamphlets, in which they say they have works in New Zealand?—No, that is not known to me.

222. *Mr. Reed.*] You said you thought Vestey and Co. were connected in some way with American capital: can you tell the Committee in what way?—No, I have not got sufficient knowledge on the subject, but I think they shifted their centre of operations to America.

223. Do you know anything about the Union Cold Storage Company?—They are connected with them.

224. Are they American?—I could not say. I do not know where the capital is held.

225. Do you know where Vestey and Co. themselves are situated and have their offices?—I understand in New York, but I am not clear on the matter.